

APOLOGY LETTER BANK

The Apology Letter Bank program allows offenders to write letters of apology to the victims for their crimes. Victims are notified if a letter has been written and sent to the Board of Parole and may choose whether or not to receive the letter. Apology Letters are voluntarily written by offenders and are an attempt to communicate acknowledgement of fault, responsibility, accountability, remorse, and the pain caused. It is offered by an offender to a victim(s) and relates to a specific incident. The letter does not offer excuses or request for forgiveness.

- The Wyoming Department of Corrections does not allow offenders to send letters directly to the victim(s) of their offense without the Warden's approval.
- The victim or offender may initiate the apology letter process.
- The victim decides:
 - If and when the apology letter will be accepted
 - Whether or not the offender is informed that the victim requested, received, and/or has read the apology letter.
- Submitted apology letters are reviewed by the Wyoming Board of Parole Victim Services Coordinator (VSC) to determine appropriateness and to provide feedback to the offender on ways to improve the letter, if necessary.
- When a completed apology letter has been accepted into the Apology Letter Bank, the VSC will (attempt to) contact the victim to inform of the letter. If a letter is not collected, it will remain in the Letter Bank for any future inquiries by the victim.

Basics

Participation is voluntary and will not affect good time, parole eligibility, or parole conditions.

Participation in the apology letter process does not constitute permission for the offender to make additional contact with the victim. The victim may choose to respond to an apology letter. However, any further correspondence requires approval from the Warden.

The program is intended to facilitate rehabilitation of inmates and remediation of harm done to victims. Participation should indicate true remorse for your victimization.

Do not be discouraged if you are requested to make revisions to your letter. Use the guidelines for reference when writing your letter to ensure appropriateness. Get input from others, and expect feedback.

Submit completed apology letters with the completed Request to Participate Form to:

WY Board of Parole
 Attn: Victim Services Coordinator
 3120 Old Faithful Rd., Ste 300
 Cheyenne, WY 82002.

Institutions will maintain information about the Letter Bank and caseworkers will assist in educating offenders about the program.

GUIDELINES

Congratulations on your decision to write an apology letter to your victims. A sincere apology letter demonstrates that you regret the harm you caused, and that you accept responsibility for your crime(s). Your victim may choose not to receive your letter or respond. Writing the letter will help you identify your true feelings about yourself, your victim, and your crime(s). This is a *positive* step for YOU.

Please review the following guidelines to write an appropriate apology letter to your victim(s). Your letter will be reviewed before being offered to the victim and will be rejected if it is determined to not meet these guidelines.

- ✓ Letters will contain an apology to the victim(s) for the fact and impact of the crime and are not to reflect the inmate's regret for the fact of being caught, prosecuted and incarcerated or to otherwise bemoan the negative impact of the crime on the circumstances of the inmate.
- ✓ Letters will not ask for forgiveness from the victim. Similarly, letters will not seek the victim's support for a parole, commutation or other favorable action for the inmate, as the program is not intended to place any responsibilities on victims in any manner.
- ✓ Letters will not deny, minimize or make excuses for the crime, and should reflect acceptance of responsibility for the crime.
- ✓ Letters will not proselytize for any religious belief. It's ok to tell the victim, for example, that your faith is helping change your criminal behavior, but it's not ok to use your letter to push religion.
- ✓ Letters will be respectful to the victim and will not contain any content which might be construed as being rude, obscene, threatening, romantic, sexual or derogatory in nature.
- ✓ Where there was a personal, romantic or family relationship with the victim prior to the crime, the letter will not contain pleas for re-establishment or strengthening of that relationship.
- ✓ Letters will not complain about the conditions of confinement.
- ✓ Only one offender apology letter per victim will be allowed, and letters will be limited to offenses that are currently being served.

Additional tips to assist in writing your letter:

- Your victim might like to hear what you are doing to change your lifestyle so that you will not commit more crimes.
- Be brief. Avoid long, rambling letters.
- Ask for help writing your letter from a trusted friend or a corrections staff person.
- Write your letter and then put it aside. When you read it a day, week or month later, you may want to make changes.
- Be sure your handwriting is legible. Print or type if necessary.